DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 458 062 RC 023 197

AUTHOR Shutiva, Charmaine L.
TITLE Career and Academic Guidance for American Indian and Alaska Native Youth. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, Charleston, WV.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-RC-01-3
PUB DATE 2001-10-00
NOTE 4p.
CONTRACT ED-99-CO-0027
AVAILABLE FROM ERIC/CRESS, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325-1348. For full text: http://www.ael.org/eric/digests/edorc01-3.htm.
PUB TYPE ERIC Publications (071) -- ERIC Digests in Full Text (073)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Alaska Natives; *American Indian Culture; American Indian Education; American Indians; Career Guidance; *Cultural Awareness; Elementary Secondary Education; School Community Relationship; *School Counseling; *School Guidance; Student School Relationship; Well Being
IDENTIFIERS *American Indian Students; Cultural Sensitivity; *Cultural Values; ERIC Digests

ABSTRACT

American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students strive to maintain their heritage while learning to be successful in the dominant culture. Although academic and career success are worthy goals, AI/AN students can pay a heavy price to achieve them. To provide effective and responsive career and academic guidance for AI/AN youth, teachers and counselors must be aware of underlying cultural values and beliefs that can affect students' academic and career choices. This digest briefly describes demographics and trends in AI/AN education, cultural values and beliefs that provide a context for education and counseling, and responsive career and academic guidance practices for working with AI/AN students. Brief statistics highlight the educational progress made in recent decades in terms of AI/AN college enrollment and graduation, but also point out concerns related to low educational attainment and academic achievement. Three important traditional values--all related to wellness as harmony in spirit, mind, and body--are discussed, along with implications for counseling and guidance: (1) giving and sharing of goods, resources, skills, and cash with family and community; (2) group cohesiveness or "glory to the group" and possible conflicts with individualistic rewards; and (3) adequate time to observe and reflect prior to participation and communication, and need to accommodate student participation in traditional tribal ceremonies. Seven other recommendations for effective and responsive counseling are listed. (Contains 15 references.) (SV)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 458 062

Career and Academic Guidance for American Indian and Alaska Native Youth

ERIC DIGEST

EDO-RC-01-3
October 2001

By Charmaine L. Shutiva

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

RC 023 197

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EDO-RC-01-3 October 2001

Career and Academic Guidance for American Indian and Alaska Native Youth

Charmaine L. Shutiva

ERIC Educational Resources Information Center
DIGEST

Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools
including
Alaska Natives and American Indians, Mexican Americans, Migrants, and Outdoor Education

AEL
PO Box 1348
Charleston, WV
25325-1348

0231 97

Full of determination and courage, American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) students strive to maintain their heritage while learning to be successful in the dominant culture (St. Germaine, 1995). Although academic and career success are worthy goals, AI/AN students can bear a heavy price to achieve them. Outwardly and inwardly many AI/AN students face challenges to their "Indianness," especially in relation to their ongoing ability to use their tribal languages; participate in religious ceremonies; take pride in tribal, clan, and family ancestry; and remain faithful to tribal beliefs and value systems (Baruth & Manning, 1992; Locust, 1988; Rodriquez, 1997).

To provide effective and responsive career and academic guidance for AI/AN youth, teachers and counselors need to be aware of underlying cultural values and beliefs that can affect students' choices about academic success and pursuit of a career. This Digest briefly describes (a) current demographics and trends in AI/AN education, (b) cultural values and beliefs that provide a context for education and counseling, and (c) effective and responsive career and academic guidance practices for working with AI/AN students.

Current Demographics and Trends in American Indian/Alaska Native Education

The 2000 Census revealed the population of American Indians and Alaska Natives to be 2.4 million people, which represents about 0.9 percent of the total U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2001). The AI/AN population is relatively young, with about 34 percent under the age of 18, compared with the total population, which has about 26 percent in this age category (Meyer, 2001). More than 49,000 students attend Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)-operated or funded tribal schools, while nearly 400,000 (89 percent) attend public and private schools (U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2001). About 38 percent of AI/AN students attend rural schools (NCES, 2000).[1]

There is some very encouraging news about AI/AN educational participation:

- AI/AN enrollment in colleges and universities grew by 67 percent between 1976 and 1994—a remarkable increase; the number of bachelor's degrees awarded grew by 86 percent, and the number of associate degrees awarded grew by 95 percent during that same time period (Pavel, et al., 1998).
- The average salary in 1994 for AI/AN bachelor's degree recipients was slightly above the average for all recipients; and the three most frequent fields of study were business and management, social sciences, and education (Pavel, et al., 1998).
- In the fall of 1996, 134,000 non-Hispanic American Indians were enrolled in colleges and universities, up from 84,000 in 1980 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

Along with the good news are some areas of concern:

- Only 65.6 percent of all AI/AN persons 25 years old and over have a high school diploma or higher and only 9.4 percent had a bachelor's degree or higher, according to the 1990 census (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).
- SAT scores were below the national average—though above scores of African Americans, Mexican Americans, and two other Hispanic groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999)

It is evident from these brief statistics that educational progress has been made in the past few decades but challenges remain.

Native Values and Beliefs

Locust explains,

> The belief system is the bond that holds civilizations together, and is the small voice inside of each of us that urges us to be true to what we have been taught. As Native people, we cannot separate our spiritual teachings from our learning, nor can we separate our beliefs about who and what we are from our values and our behaviors. (1988, p. 329)

An understanding of Native traditional values and beliefs that influence AI/AN students' behavior is key to providing them meaningful career and academic guidance (Bearcrane, Dodd, Nelson, & Ostwald, 1990; Sanders, 1987; Szasz, 1991).

Giving and sharing. Tribal leaders across the United States advise youth to go to college or technical school, get an education and *then come back and help your people*. In giving this advice, tribal leaders are expressing the values of *giving and sharing* that have enabled tribes to maintain group unity and survive.

Giving and sharing are expressed in many different ways. In the traditional American Indian world we are taught to share our goods (car or truck, ceremonial items, meals, education) and good fortune (work earnings, casino winnings) for the betterment of the family and community. Examples include using your vehicle to take grandma to the grocery store, or auntie to the laundromat, or cousin-brother to catch his ride to go firefighting (of course, never asking for gas money). Going away to college to get a degree and then returning to the reservation or the city to develop or work for programs that serve the community are also expressions of giving and sharing that are valued and *respected*.

Giving and sharing are the principles expressed in pow-wow giveaways, in the feast days of New Mexico's Pueblos, and in the potlatches of the Northern coastal tribes. It is considered an honor to be able to give away items that families may have worked days, months, or years preparing, saving for, cooking, or baking. In the AI/AN world it is better to give than to receive.

Counselors can support these values by providing financial advice as part of career counseling. Students may need to set up saving accounts so they can contribute necessary items when ceremonies arrive and not be stressed financially. Also, even for students it is important to contribute to family and community life in a variety of ways, such as providing car rides, using new skills to work for programs that help the Native community, or sharing talents by making cultural items (e.g., rattles, drums, moccasins, potteries). Continuing to give and share can help AI/AN youth to blend their two worlds and ultimately succeed in both.

Glory to the group. Another important traditional value is *group cohesiveness* or glory to the group, not to

individual attainment. This value is based on the core belief that wellness is harmony in spirit, mind, and body (Locust, 1988). Students who are singled out for an outstanding academic accomplishment can experience confusion because rewarding the individual can jeopardize group cohesiveness. To help support this value and reduce cultural conflict at school honors assemblies, teachers and counselors should consider also asking parents, guardians, and grandparents to stand up and be recognized as each student receives an award. This type of honoring is exhibited at pow-wows when head dancers are honored.

Time to observe and reflect. Adequate *time to observe and reflect* prior to participation and communication is another important value shared by many AI/AN tribes. This value, too, is based on the core belief that wellness is harmony in spirit, mind, and body, and is also grounded in a world view that is circular rather than linear. Many AI/AN students learn to do things through observation, imitation, and direct experience of real-world activities. As a result students may not be highly verbal nor overtly involved in classroom or counseling discussions. This *does not* mean they are not learning.

Providing opportunities to learn through hands-on cooperative experiences will support their success. For example, a group counseling experience to teach about careers could involve students designing and building a model bridge. This counseling method would effectively teach the various types of work roles involved, such as being a surveyor, an architect, a highway safety inspector, a truck driver, a welder, a construction worker, an environmentalist, and a geologist. These are all examples of careers that are valuable and needed on Indian reservations as well as in cities. Providing career counseling that can help students observe and reflect on the possibilities for employment on their respective reservations is also strongly endorsed and supported by tribal leaders.

Other needed time to reflect, much supported by tribal leaders, includes participation in the traditional religious ceremonies that help AI/AN students to affirm their tribal identity. It is not uncommon for an AI/AN student to participate in a traditional ceremony one day and attend high school or university the next. Many ceremonies and rituals are based on the belief of a prevailing wellness-unwellness duality that surrounds and permeates the ceremonial functions. The primary focus of these ceremonies is to maintain a harmonious balance between mind, body, and spirit of all living things (Locust, 1988). Religious ceremonies can sometimes take many days. Because participation in these ceremonies may affect an AI/AN student's attendance and academic work it is recommended that counselors assist AI/AN youth by helping them plan to (a) set up tutorial services if necessary and (b) communicate ahead of time with teachers about the reason for the absence so teachers can become more respectful of and sensitive to cultural differences. Counselors can also support students by understanding and affirming participation in religious ceremonies, even when participation poses a risk to academic or career success, acknowledging the importance of ceremonial life for the maintenance of wellness.

Providing Effective and Responsive Counseling

A variety of other efforts can help teachers and counselors provide effective and responsive career counseling:

- encourage strong and regular involvement of elders and tribal government leaders in the teaching and counseling of Native students
- provide consistent training of non-Native teachers and counselors in the cultural values and social factors affecting AI/AN students as they pursue their educations
- ease restrictions that block schools from employing valued Native community members who can serve as positive role models
- increase AI/AN students' knowledge about their options by providing a more accurate understanding of how tribal cultures interact with the complex, multicultural American society
- validate both the traditional and contemporary cultures of students, recognizing the contributions that AI/ANs have made in shaping the larger multicultural society
- develop and seek scholarship funds that attach social obligations for AI/AN students to give something back in return
- develop long-term mentoring relationships between students and AI/AN professionals

1. This statistic was derived by calculating the total number of AI/AN students who attended schools designated in locale codes 6 (small town) and 7 (rural) as a percent of the total number of AI/AN students counted on the Common Core of Data for the 1997-98 school year.

References

Baruth, L. G., & Manning, M. L. (1992). Understanding Native American children and adolescents. In M. L. Manning (Ed.) *Multicultural education of children and adolescents.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Bearcrane, J., Dodd, J. M., Nelson, J. R., & Ostwald, S. W. (1990). Educational characteristics of Native Americans. *Rural Educator, 11*(3), 1-5.

Locust, C. (1988). Wounding the spirit: Discrimination and traditional American Indian belief systems. *Harvard Educational Review, 58*(3), 315-30.

Meyer, J. (2001). *Age: 2000. Census 2000 Brief.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved October 19, 2001, from http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-12.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics. (1999). *Digest of education statistics, 1999.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Retrieved October 19, 2001, from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2000/digest99/d99t134.html

National Center for Education Statistics. (2000). *Common core of data (CCD): School years 1993-94 through 1997-98 (CD-ROM).* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

Pavel, D. M., Skinner, R. R., Farris, E., Cahalan, M., Tippeconnic, J., & Stein, W. (1998). *American Indians and Alaska Natives in postsecondary education.* Technical Report. NCES 98-291. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 424 081)

Rodriquez, R. (1997). Learning to live a warrior's life. *Black Issues in Higher Education, 14,* 38-40.

Sanders, D. (1987). Cultural conflicts: An important factor in academic failures of American Indian students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 18*(15), 81-89.

St. Germaine, R. (1995). *Drop-out rates among American Indian and Alaska Native students: Beyond cultural discontinuity.* ERIC Digest. Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 388 492)

Szasz, M. C. (1991). Current conditions in American Indian and Alaska Native communities. In *Indian Nations At Risk [Task Force Commissioned Papers].* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 343 755)

U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs. (2001). *2001 fingertip facts.* Washington, DC: Author, Office of Indian Education Programs. Retrieved October 19, 2001, from http://www.oiep.bia.edu/finger/2001%20fingertipfacts.pdf

U.S. Census Bureau. (2001). *Profiles of general demographic characteristics: 2000 census of population and housing, United States.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration. Retrieved October 19, 2001, from http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2000/dp1/2khus.pdf

U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). *Census Bureau facts for features: American Indian heritage month: November 2000.* Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau, Public Information Office. Retrieved October 19, 2001, from http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2000/cb00ff13.html

U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). *Statistical abstract of the United States: 2000 (population section).* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration. Retrieved October 19, 2001, from http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/statab/sec01.pdf

Charmaine L. Shutiva, Ph.D., is the teacher/coordinator for the Creativity Abounds Program (the gifted and talented program) at Isleta Elementary School at Isleta Pueblo, New Mexico.

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. ED-99-CO-0027. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI, the Department, or AEL.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools is operated by AEL, Inc. AEL serves as the Regional Educational Laboratory for Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia and operates the Eisenhower Regional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education for these same four states. In addition, it serves as the Region IV Comprehensive Center. AEL is an affirmative action/equal opportunity employer.

www.ael.org • 800-624-9120 • aelinfo@ael.org

EDO-RC-01-3